

Healthy Summer Cookouts

Summer is a time for get-togethers, parties and backyard cookouts. While hot dogs, burgers and potato salad are traditionally summertime favorites, they also can weigh heavy on the heart and add to your waistline. But you can still have an enjoyable summer cookout while offering foods that are healthy and flavorful.

Choose a Lean Entrée

Instead of the typical hamburgers and hot dogs, try some lean proteins for a change. Some ideas for low-fat protein options include:

- Fresh fish on the grill. Salmon, grouper, shrimp and tuna can be cooked whole in steaks or filets.
- Grill the chicken whole or offer grilled chicken breasts. Marinate it in a chipotle seasoning, Cajun seasoning, BBQ sauce or jerk sauce. If cooking with the skin on, remove the skin before eating to reduce fat.
- Pork or beef tenderloin offers flavor. Be sure to trim any fat first.
- Veggie burgers for vegetarian or vegan guests. Try portabella, black bean or roasted vegetable burgers.
- Grilled veggies can make great options by themselves. Choose flavorful vegetables like portabella mushrooms, squash, onions and peppers.

Lighten Up the Salad

Swap some ingredients in potato or pasta salad to provide full flavor and lower fat:

- Substitute full-fat mayonnaise in your potato salad for light mayonnaise or light sour cream. Add flavor with pickle juice, lemon juice or fresh herbs.
- Try whole-wheat pasta in place of enriched pasta.
- Replace creamy dressings with Dijon mustard or flavorful vinaigrette dressings.
- Add grilled, raw or roasted veggies to any salad. They will add bulk while keeping calorie count low.

Offer Healthy Side Dishes

Instead of potato chips or snacks high in salt, sugar or fat, try some of these refreshing choices:

- Black bean and corn salad
- Baked tortilla chips with fresh salsa and guacamole
- Corn on the cob
- Fresh fruit kebobs or fruit salad
- Grilled veggies served warm or room temperature
- Whole wheat pitas served with hummus and vegetables

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